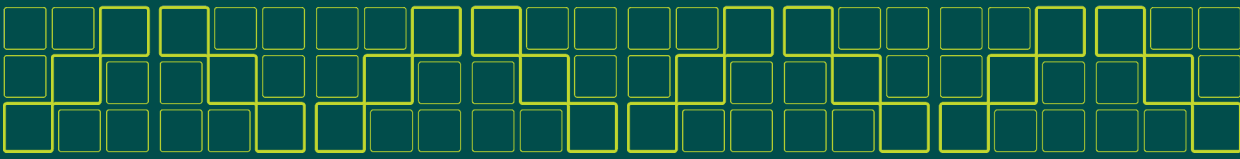


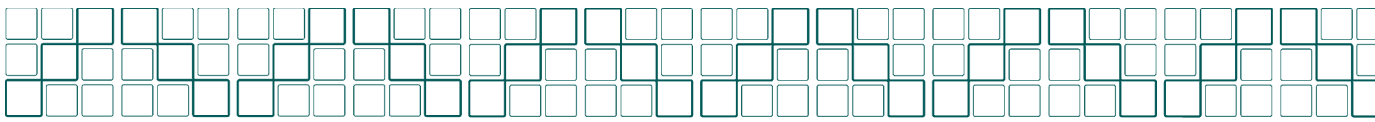
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# Interviewing For Academic Positions

**Dr. Sharon L. Milgram**  
**[milgrams@od.nih.gov](mailto:milgrams@od.nih.gov)**

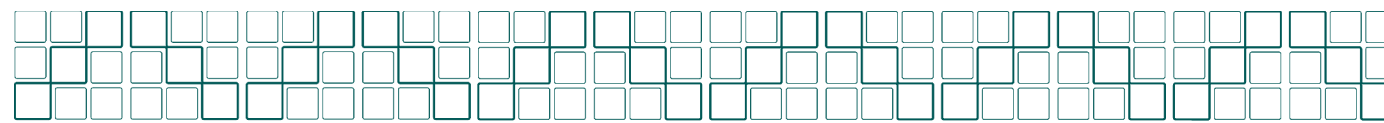


NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH



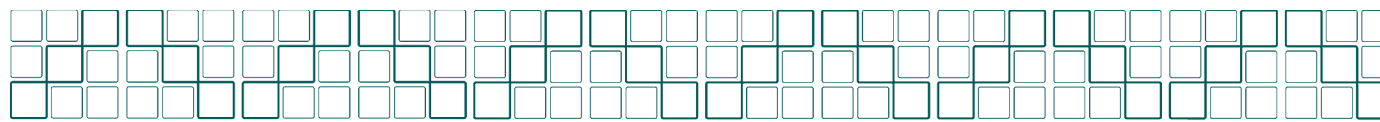
# Your Goals

- Convince members of the department that:
  - Your work is exciting, innovative, and fundable
  - You can do build a research group and successfully compete in your field
  - You will be a great colleague, teacher and mentor
- Learn about the institution and department
  - In general and more specifically in your discipline
- Learn about the area



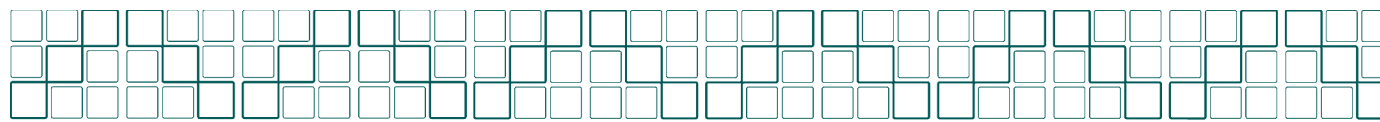
# Interviewing by Phone or Videoconferencing

- Use a land-line and find a quiet place free of distractions
- OITE has a videoconferencing facility and skype waiver if you need it
- Typically 20 – 40 minutes, anywhere from 1 - 3 interviewers
- Jot down names of interviewers and refer to each by name when answering questions
- Loss of facial and body language cues can be difficult
  - In the absence of a clear signal, we tend to ramble on
  - Give an answer, then pause. If no follow up - ask if they would like you to expand on anything
- Conversation will likely end with them asking you if you have questions



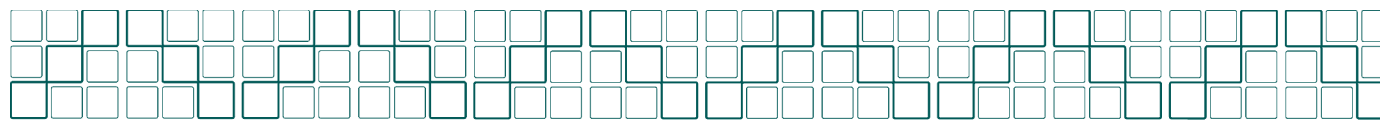
# Common Phone Questions

- Tell us a bit about yourself
- Why did you apply for this position?
- Where is your research heading in the next 5 - 10 years?
- What research resources will you need to be successful?
- What is the status of the grant you listed on your CV?
- What is the status of the publications you listed as ‘in preparation’ or ‘under review’ ?
- When are you available to start?
- What can you teach? What would you like to teach?
- Tell us how you deal with a classroom of students with different abilities and levels of motivation?
- How do you deal with developing a new course?



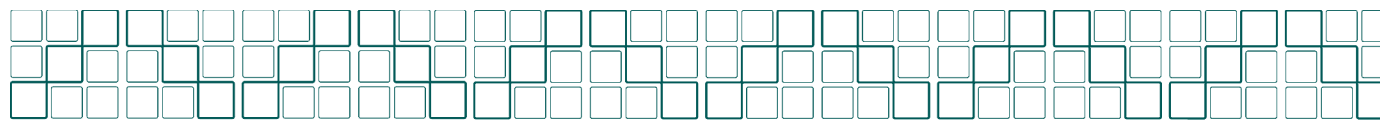
# What You Will Do During Campus Visits

- Eat all meals with potential colleagues
- Meet with:
  - The Chair of relevant Departments and Centers
  - Individual faculty - in and out of your field
  - Members of the search committee
  - Students and/or postdocs - often over lunch
  - [Deans or other University leaders]
- Present:
  - A seminar (50 minutes)
  - [A chalk talk]
  - [A class]
- Tour:
  - Facilities, potential lab space, classrooms, and cores
  - The town and surrounding areas



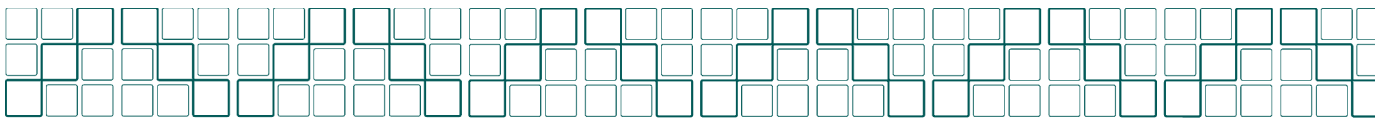
# Getting Ready

- Follow instructions; be clear regarding travel plans and other logistics
- Carefully read University & Department websites
- Learn about the people you will be meeting with
- Make lists of questions you need answered and resources you need to learn about
- Consider personal/professional issues that you would like to discuss with the Chair or head of the search committee
- Get clothes - comfortable, neat, and consistent with the science culture. Do NOT get new shoes!
- Practice your talk(s) MANY TIMES



# Things You Might Be Asked About

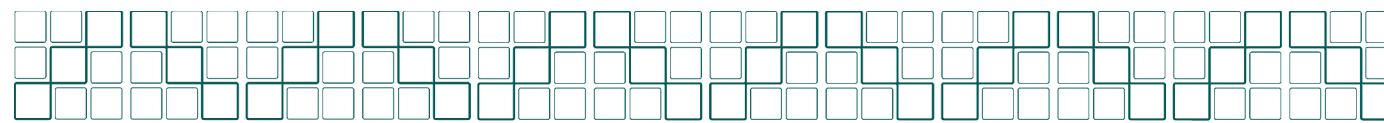
- Any updates to your CV
  - Publications listed as in preparation or under review
  - Priority scores/outcomes on any submitted grants
- Specific aims for your first grant
- Major equipment needs
- CV for your spouse or partner (if relevant)



# Remember

- Preparation pays off
- First impressions form quickly
- You are trying to connect professionally AND personally
- Even social activities are part of the interview
- You must have questions when asked
- Strong interview skills develop with practice





# What Interviewers Evaluate

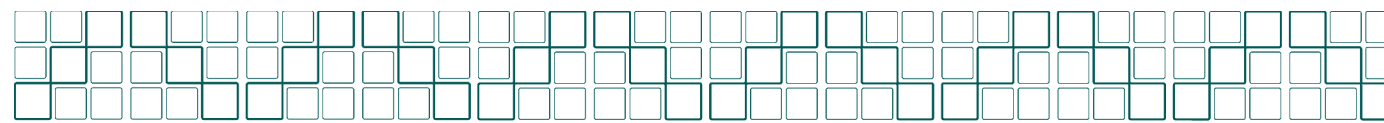
## ■ Non-verbal communication\*

- ☐ Appearance
- ☐ Eye contact
- ☐ Handshake
- ☐ Facial expression
- ☐ Gestures
- ☐ Posture
- ☐ Nervous mannerisms

## ■ Verbal communication

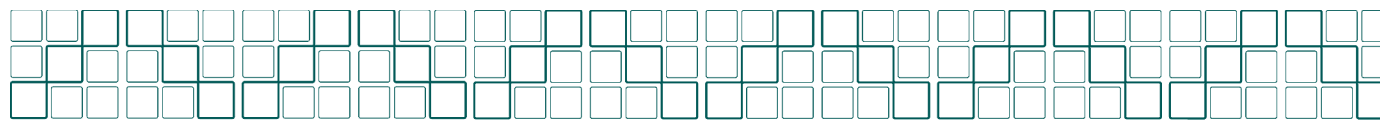
- ☐ Language, grammar, and sentence structure
- ☐ Ability to organize and express ideas
- ☐ Ability to listen and respond appropriately

\* Watch the video on the NIH Intramural Science Linked-In Group



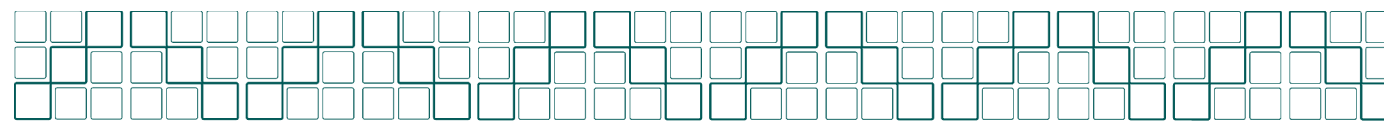
# Questions You Are Likely To Hear

- Where is your research going to be in 5/10/25 years?
- What new techniques/approaches will you be developing?
- What's going to be in your first RO1? Then what's next?
- Where else will you get money?
- What core facilities and equipment do you need?
- How will you distinguish yourself from your mentor?
- Do you like teaching? What do you want to teach?
- Do you currently supervise students?
- What is your approach to mentoring?
- Why are you excited about this position?
- Who here might you collaborate with?
- What department/school committee work interests you?



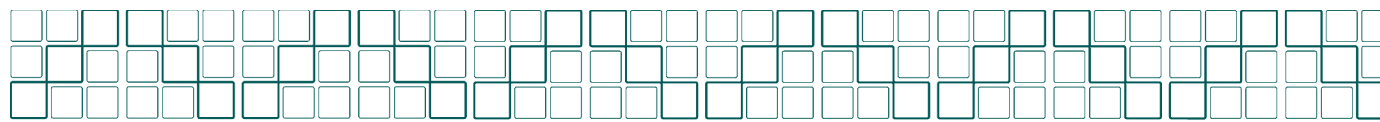
# Unique To PUIs

- How will you excite students about your research?
- What types of projects can they do in your group?
- Tell us about your teaching style
- What experiences do you have working with and teaching diverse students?
- How do you deal with disruptive students in the classroom?
- What are your thoughts on technology in the classroom?
- Tell us about your teaching philosophy
- Share some specific successes and failures in the classroom
- What have you learned about our student body that excites you/concerns you?



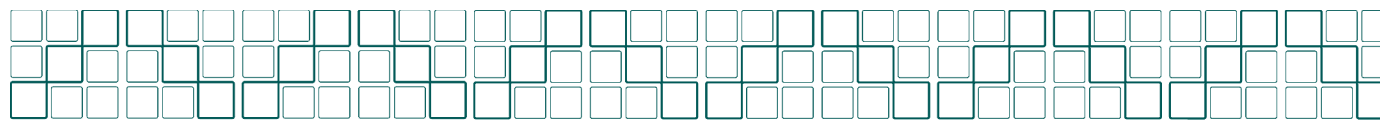
# Unique To Clinical Departments

- How will you integrate your research with your clinical responsibilities?
- What will be in your K grant?
- What types of patient samples, populations and/or clinical research resources will you need to be successful?
- How much protected research time do you need/want?
- Will you enthusiastically participate in our medical student and resident training programs?
- What experience do you have mentoring and teaching medical students, interns, residents?



# What You Should Be Asking About

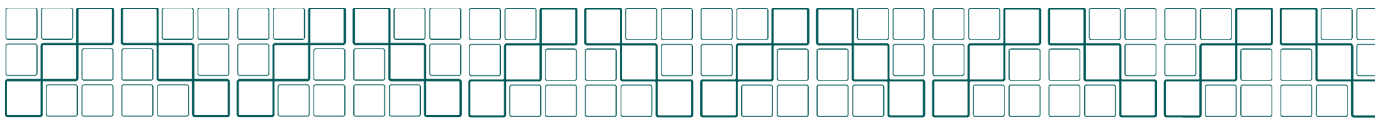
- The culture of the Department/Center/Institution
- Research themes and areas of focus
- Types and amount of teaching and/or clinical duties
- Quality and numbers of students and/or postdocs
- Training grants and other educational resources available
- Mentorship of junior faculty
- Shared resources and core facilities
- Grant and scholarship expectations
- Tenure and salary policies
- Personal views of the department, school, and area
- Anything important to you personally or professionally



# Need Two Jobs?

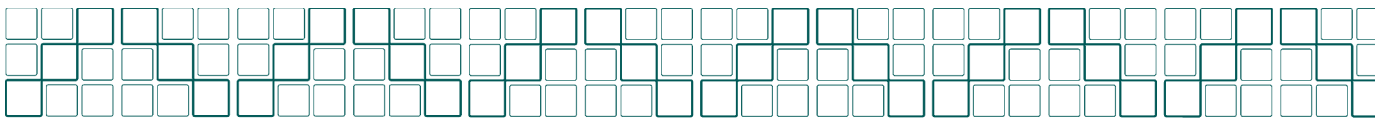
- Best discussed with dept chair or head of the search committee, but others may probe on their behalf
- Appropriate to bring this up during the first interview
  - Be positive
  - Ask about local consortia/agreements that might have useful resources (see <http://www.hercjobs.org>)
  - Be clear about types of positions your partner will accept, but try to be/appear as flexible as possible

**Recommendations on Partner Accommodation and Dual Career Appointments (2010), AAUP** at <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/dual.htm#10>



# Second Interviews

- Can be an interview or a recruiting trip
- Provide a list of core facilities/resources you need to see
- Bring a list of major equipment needs
- Will likely meet more faculty in your field
- Will tour facilities and possible lab space
- May include more formal discussion of salary, benefits, funding expectations, and tenure policies
- Your chance to clarify and express your needs [and wants]
- Typically not a full blown negotiation

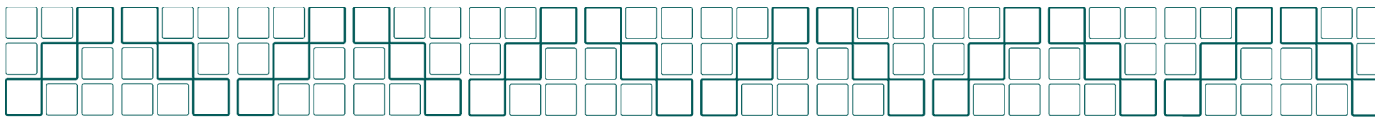


# Three Types of Talks

- Science seminar
  - Shows you are doing exciting science and that you can talk about it
- Chalk talk
  - Shows what you will do when you first arrive, that it is fundable and that you can defend your ideas effectively
- Teaching talk
  - Shows that you can teach and demonstrates your classroom style (s) and approach(es)

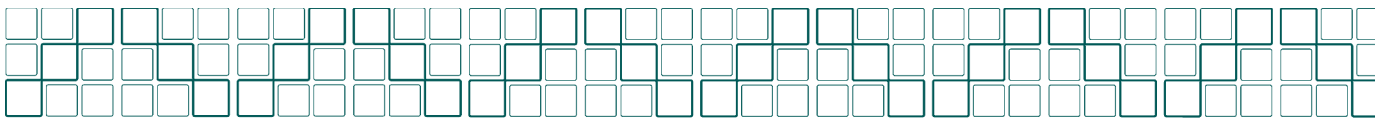
[https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/\\_2/110/How\\_to\\_Give\\_an\\_Effective\\_Job\\_Talk](https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/_2/110/How_to_Give_an_Effective_Job_Talk)





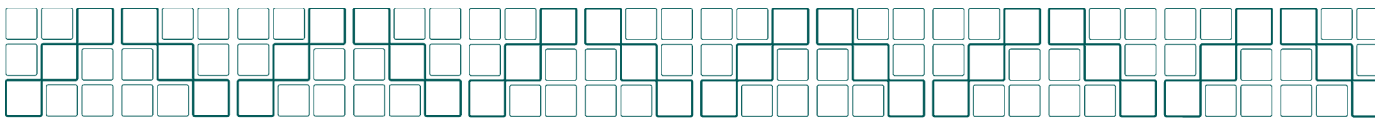
# Know the Rules

- General:
  - Time
  - IT resources
- Unique to chalk talks:
  - Slides
- Unique to teaching talks:
  - Topic
  - Audience



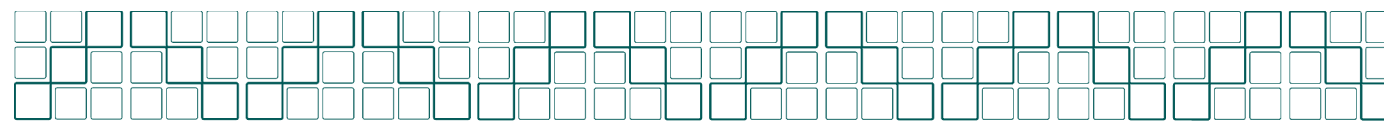
# The Job Seminar

- Know your audience
- Understand what the audience is evaluating
- Tell a story - less is often more
- Have crisp, clean data slides
- Be engaging and personable
- Carefully consider questions you might get and practice answering them



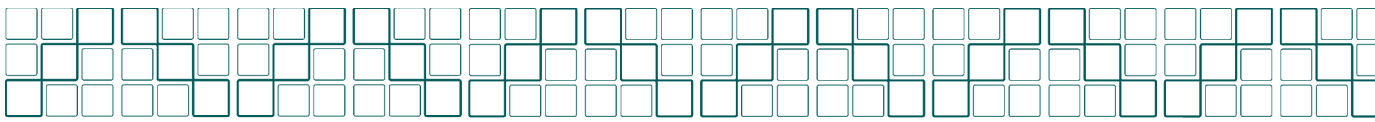
# The Chalk Talk

- An informal discussion about your first goals and grants
- Shows that you can think on your feet
- Expect and welcome interruptions
- Friendly but vigorous discussion is a good sign
- Everyone is watching how well you take criticism and when/how you back down
- Tells you a lot about the department



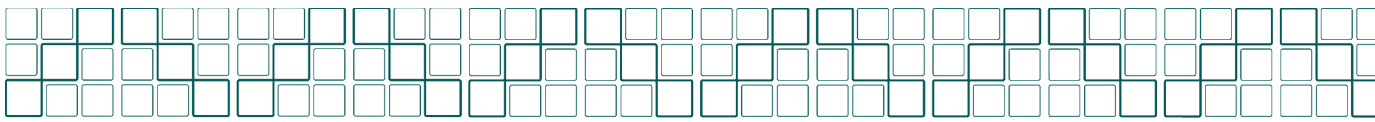
# Preparing For A Chalk Talk

- Preparation starts now
  - Begin talking about your future work far in advance
  - Begin mapping out grant proposals early
- Plan and practice how you will start
- Draw a model right away; use the model throughout the discussion
- List your first Aims; refer back to them throughout the discussion
- Practice with colleagues who will give you a hard time



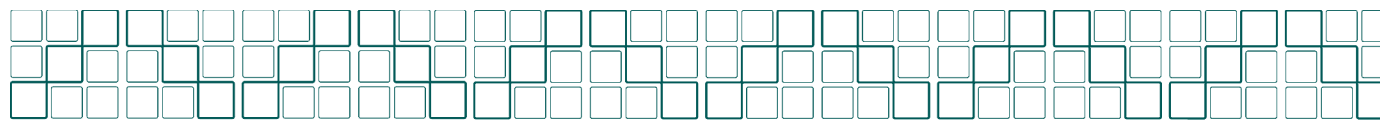
# The Teaching Talk

- May be given a specific topic or you may get to choose
- Learn about the students in advance
- Decide formal vs. informal
- Decide high tech vs. low tech
- Talk to the students and not the faculty or administrators sitting at the back
- Not just a lecture



# How To Prepare For A Teaching Talk

- Prepare your exercises, activities and materials early
- Talk to undergraduate faculty at comparable institutions
- Start practicing with colleagues, but eventually you need to find a group of undergraduates or postbacs (we can help with that)



# NIH Resources

- Your Institute/Center/Branch/Lab may sponsor a postdoc seminar program
- NIH Special Interest Groups and retreats
- OITE Career Services Center for mock interviews
- OITE journal clubs for postbacs and summer interns
- FAES often has teaching opportunities
- Job talk videos and other resources at [www.training.nih.gov](http://www.training.nih.gov)